CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 29 AUGUST 1996 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I.OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE AUSTRIAN FEDERAL MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS CONCERNING THE OUTCOME OF THE CTBT NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA

Please find enclosed the translation into English of a Press Release, dated Friday, 23 August 1996, of the Austrian Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, concerning the outcome of the CTBT negotiations in Geneva.

I would be grateful if this Press Release could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

(Signed): Gudrun Graf
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of Austria

Press Release

The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs deeply regrets the fact that the Conference on Disarmament, due to the opposition of one country, was not able to agree on transmitting the Draft Treaty text for a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to the United Nations' General Assembly.

Despite this situation, however, one should not disregard the existence of a complete Treaty text which meets with large acceptance. This Treaty text is the fruit of two and a half years of arduous negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and it enjoys the support of almost all Member States of the Conference, including the five nuclear weapon States. It is a characteristic feature of such treaty negotiations that the final result contains many delicate and balanced compromises. Although it is therefore understandable that some States have difficulties in supporting this text, it is also true that further changes would have completely reopened the compromise package proposed by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, which would have led to an unravelling of the broad agreement achieved. As a consequence, it did not seem reasonable to continue the negotiations on the treaty text.

We face the historic chance to present this text to the international community for signature now. Austria firmly advocates the view that the world community should not let this opportunity elapse. The aim of prohibiting, once and for all, nuclear explosions must not, for the sake of mankind, be frustrated. Austria therefore sincerely hopes that during the next weeks the United Nations' General Assembly, even if not being presented with a report of the Conference on Disarmament, adopts the Treaty text with an overwhelming majority and opens it for signature.

After all, we are dealing with an effective means of inhibiting the development of new generations of nuclear weapons and of their proliferation, and last but not least also with a measure for the protection of the environment.